

**Testimony of the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology  
Before the  
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Tuesday, February 24, 2025  
2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:  
H.B. 1697, RELATING TO NATURAL HAIR BRAIDING**

Chair Matayoshi and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alan Yim, and I am the Executive Officer of the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (Board). The Board offers the following comments:

The purpose of this bill is to exempt natural hair braiders from licensing requirements under the Barbering and Cosmetology Licensing Act.

At its February 10, 2026 meeting, the Board reaffirmed its position that “hair braiding” falls within the scope of practice of cosmetologist, hairdressers, and barbers. However, because the training and examination requirements to natural hair braiding are minimal, the Board has determined that individuals engaged solely in hair braiding are not required to be licensed. However, the Board also identified the following activities often associated with hair braiding as subject to licensure: waxing, cleansing, cutting, singing, coloring, relaxing, trimming, shampooing, and relaxing.

The Board is concerned, however, that exempting natural hair braiders from licensure will create a gap in consumer protection, particularly with respect to sanitation training and enforcement. The use of braiding devices in the practice of natural hair braiding may present health and safety risks if proper sanitation standards are not followed. If natural hair braiders are exempted under this bill, The Board will have limited authority to enforce consumer safety requirements related to these services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



# HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

## KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I

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DATE: Tuesday, February 24, 2026  
TIME: 2:00 PM  
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE  
Conference Room 329  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street

To:

[COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE](#)

Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair

Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair

From: Alphonso Braggs, Chair

and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

**Re: HB 1697 Relating to Natural Hair Braiding**

**Testimony in SUPPORT**

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5. HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment (Chapter 378, Part I, HRS), housing (Chapter 515, HRS), public accommodations (Chapter 489, HRS), and access to state and state-funded services (HRS § 368-1.5).

The HCRC is in strong support of HB1697, which exempts natural hair braiders from unnecessary cosmetology licensing requirements under certain conditions. This bill is about fairness, culture, and opportunity. Unnecessary licensing requirements for natural hair braiders can create barriers for people in our community.

Natural hair braiding is a cultural tradition, not a chemical or cutting service that would be subjected to more regulation and/or licensing. It is a practice passed down through generations and traditionally done by aunties, sisters, cousins, and is generally safe and low risk. Current laws force braiders to spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in cosmetology school learning things they would not use as a natural hair braider, like nail care and makeup. HB1697 would be a practical framework to ensure hair practitioners have equal access to providing their culturally rooted practices without the costly and burdensome requirements unrelated to their practice.

Nearly twenty-four states have exempted braiders from cosmetology, hairstyling, or barbering licenses. Braiding is one of the most accessible ways for women, especially Black women and immigrants, to start a business. It creates economic opportunities. Removing these barriers means more small businesses, more self-sufficiency, and more diversity in our economy. It helps families thrive, and that benefits the whole community. Subjecting entrepreneurial braiders to cosmetology licensing requirements is misplaced and impacts Black women unequally.

Passing HB1697 is a way to honor the contributions of Black communities and show that Hawaii values inclusion and cultural respect. HB1697 is a simple, common-sense change that promotes fairness, supports small businesses, and celebrates our treasured culture and diversity which is in line with the foundational values of Hawai'i.

Lastly it is fitting that this measure is being heard during Black History Month. Thank you for hearing this measure.



INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

February 23, 2026

Re: Support for House Bill 1697

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Courtney Fontaine, and I am with the Institute for Justice—a nonprofit, public interest law firm that works to protect civil liberties, including the right to pursue the occupation of one’s choosing. I write today in strong support of HB 1697, which would exempt natural hair braiders from unnecessary cosmetology licensing requirements in Hawaii. We commend the bill’s sponsors for recognizing the undue burden current regulations place on braiders and for working to expand economic opportunities for people who practice this culturally significant and time-honored skill.

HB 1697 is a critical step toward removing excessive and irrelevant licensing mandates that hinder people—predominantly women of color—from legally pursuing their livelihoods. In fact, . Other states have recognized this and acted accordingly—35 states have already exempted natural hair braiding from licensing laws. It is time for Hawaii to do the same.

As the bill acknowledges, natural hair braiding is a safe practice that does not involve cutting, dyeing, or the use of harsh chemicals. Yet, under Hawaii’s current licensing structure, braiders are forced to complete an arduous, costly, and unrelated training process in order to work legally.

Hawaii’s requirements for braiders are among the most burdensome in the nation. As it stands, braiders must complete 1,250 hours in a state-approved hairdressing program, which can cost upwards of \$17,000 in tuition. In Maui, for example, the only available program treats braiding as an afterthought, focusing instead on skills like cutting, coloring, bleaching, and chemical relaxing—none of which are relevant to natural hair braiding. Even worse, an alternative route requires obtaining a full cosmetology license, which demands even more time and money while forcing braiders to learn completely unrelated subjects, such as makeup application, nail care, and facials.

This excessive regulation disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and aspiring entrepreneurs. By exempting braiders from these unnecessary requirements, SB1620 will help remove artificial barriers to entry, allowing more people to legally earn a living doing what they already know how to do.

Importantly, HB 1697 does not compromise consumer safety. Natural hair braiding is a manual skill that has been practiced for generations without the need for government regulation. In fact, complaints about braiders filed with state cosmetology boards are extremely rare. The bill also includes reasonable safeguards, ensuring that salons offering only braiding services remain responsible for sanitation and proper workplace conditions.

To conclude, Hawaii's current laws require braiders to spend excessive time and money on unnecessary training while stifling entrepreneurship and economic mobility. HB 1697 is a common-sense reform that will open doors for hardworking people seeking to provide for themselves and their families through an entirely safe and legitimate cultural practice. We urge you to support HB 1697 and give natural hair braiders the ability to work without unnecessary government interference. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Courtney Fontaine  
Legislative Policy Associate  
Institute for Justice  
cfontaine@ij.org

Feb. 24, 2026, 2 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

**To: House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce**  
**Rep. Scot Z. Matayoshi, Chair**  
**Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair**

**From: Grassroot Institute of Hawaii**  
**Ted Kefalas, Director of Strategic Campaigns**

RE: COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB1697 — RELATING TO NATURAL HAIR BRAIDING

Aloha chair, vice chair and other committee members,

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii **strongly supports** [HB1697](#), which would exempt natural hair braiders from state licensing requirements under certain conditions.

This bill would add much-needed clarity to current state licensing regulations, which place hair braiders in a difficult position.

Hair braiders currently fall under the oversight of the state Board of Barbering and Cosmetology. In response to [Cornwell v. Hamilton](#), a 1999 Ninth Circuit case holding that California's mandated cosmetology curriculum was largely irrelevant to braiders, the board determined that braiders in Hawaii require a better regulatory solution,<sup>1</sup> but one has never materialized.

Thus, hair braiders in Hawaii are technically required to have a cosmetology license in order to publicly practice their craft for money. Yet, that requirement is not being enforced because of questions about its legality.

In other words, the board looks the other way on braiding while still holding the position that can — and eventually might — put forth licensing regulations for braiders.

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<sup>1</sup> Email exchange between the Grassroot Institute and the Hawaii Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, Aug. 6, 2024.

Meanwhile, the state’s cosmetology license is — as recognized by the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology — completely unsuited to the practice of braiding.

In fact, the cosmetology license itself is onerous. At an average cost of \$21,829, cosmetology programs in Hawaii are among the most expensive in the nation.<sup>2</sup>

A Hawaii cosmetology license also requires 1,800 educational hours,<sup>3</sup> but very little of that time covers braiding or the skills necessary to operate a braiding salon. Even obtaining only a hairdressing license — which requires 1,250 hours of beauty school training<sup>4</sup> — would necessitate that hopeful braiders spend substantial amounts of time and money on an education that is largely irrelevant to them.

This bill takes a sensible approach to this issue by exempting hair braiders from cosmetology licensing requirements as long as their activities are limited to braiding.

It is clear that there is no real risk to public health involved in allowing braiders to operate freely in Hawaii. Many other states have safely deregulated the practice, yet Hawaii has declined to establish braiding regulations for years.

Currently, 37 states completely exempt braiders from licensure, and the vast majority of those states have done so within the past 10 years.<sup>5</sup>

An additional consideration is that hair braiders are often women serving minority communities, with natural hair braiding often a traditional cultural practice.

The Committee should support greater opportunity and entrepreneurship in these communities by passing HB1697 to eliminate unnecessary regulations for hair braiders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ted Kefalas  
Director of Strategic Campaigns  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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<sup>2</sup> Mindy Menjou, Michael Bednarczuk and Amy Hunter, [“Beauty School Debt and Drop-outs: How State Cosmetology Licensing Fails Aspiring Beauty Workers,”](#) Institute for Justice, July 2021, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> [Ibid](#), p.24.

<sup>4</sup> [“Beauty Operator Application,”](#) Hawaii Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, accessed Feb. 22, 2026.

<sup>5</sup> [“Natural Hair Braiding Opportunity and Freedom Act,”](#) Institute for Justice, accessed Feb. 22, 2026.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:01:10 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Douglas Askman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB 2876 & HB 1697, which exempts natural hair braiders from unneeded cosmetology licensing. These regulations are outdated and too expensive for many qualified braiders, and this bill offers a good solution so braiders can continue growing their businesses. Please pass this bill.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:03:46 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daphne Barbee-Wooten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in support of HB1697/SB2876. Natural hair braiders are being forced to comply with licensing requirements that do not apply to their work. Braiding hair is natural and does not require the use of harmful chemicals. please allow this version of the Crown Act, to apply in Hawaii as it does in many other States. This bill provides a clear and fair exemption. Thank you.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:05:21 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tawna Chun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha - I think HB 1697 and SB 2876 are good bills because they get rid of the cosmetology license for hair braiders. This license is irrelevant and costly for prospective entrepreneurs who just want to braid hair. Please vote in favor of this bill.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:06:46 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brian Emmons	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. Hair braiders in Hawaii are just trying to make a living. Forcing them to get an expensive license is unfair. Please pass HB 1697 and SB 2876.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:08:32 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wayne Feike	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha - I think HB 1697 and SB 2876 are good bills because they get rid of the cosmetology license for hair braiders. This license is irrelevant and costly for prospective entrepreneurs who just want to braid hair. Please vote in favor of this bill.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:09:58 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Wendy Fujimoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please help eliminate unnecessary requirements for natural hair braiders in Hawaii. These regulations do not fit the practice of braiding. Instead, they are just an unnecessary obstacle to female entrepreneurship and women-owned businesses. I hope you agree and vote yes on house bill 1697 and senate bill 2876.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:12:38 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Leslie Lewis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe the current licensing requirements for hair braiders need to be changed. This bill offers a better approach than requiring braiders to get a cosmetology license. Please support this bill to help local businesses grow and thrive.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:14:12 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gloria Mansfield	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it respects culture and small business. Braiding has nothing to do with most cosmetology training. House bill 1697 and senate bill 2876 make the law more reasonable. Mahalo.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:15:45 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Willa Marten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because it respects culture and small business. Braiding has nothing to do with most cosmetology training. House bill 1697 and senate bill 2876 make the law more reasonable. Mahalo.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:17:48 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Mark Monoscalco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm sharing my testimony in support of HB1697/SB2876. This is a simple fix to a real problem. Hair braiders deserve clear rules that make sense. Give these hard-working, talented people a chance to work productively. Please vote yes on this legislation.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:19:10 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Barbara Nosaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please reform the licensing requirements for hair braiders in Hawaii. These regulations limit opportunities for local entrepreneurs. I urge you to support this bill and help make this change for the betterment of our community.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:20:31 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Celeste Rogers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 1697 and Senate Bill 2876, which will exempt hair braiders from needing a cosmetology license. The current requirements are not suited for braiding, and many braiders in Hawaii are stuck in limbo because of these confusing and outdated rules. I hope you will pass this bill.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:21:48 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Doris Ann Santiago	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm sharing my testimony in support of HB1697/SB2876 and I hope this resonates with you. This is a simple fix to a real problem. Hair braiders deserve clear rules that make sense. Please vote yes on this legislation.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:24:27 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Richard Vetter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is time for Hawaii to update its regulations and create a more inclusive environment for local business owners. Hair braiders shouldn't have to pay for irrelevant training and licenses before they can open their business. That is why I support the bill.

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/23/2026 12:27:07 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Wendt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'd like to submit testimony supporting HB 1697 & SB 2876. The bill provides clarity and fairness for hair braiders. Removing unnecessary licensing helps local entrepreneurs succeed. Cutting red tape and bureaucracy anywhere is always a good thing. I encourage you to pass this bill.

Leo G. Williams  
1128 Nuuanu Ave., Suite 102  
Honolulu, HI 96817  
(808) 781-2621  
leohihd@gmail.com

**LATE**

February 23, 2026

To: Chair Jarett Keohokalole, Vice Chair Carol Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee  
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026  
Hearing Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Location: House Conference Room 329 via Videoconference

RE: Testimony in Opposition to SB1697 – RELATING TO NATURAL HAIR BRAIDING

Office of Consumer Protection Committee  
Second Regular Session of the 33rd Hawai'i State Legislature

Aloha Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Leo G. Williams, a licensed Cosmetologist and Barber, and I am writing in opposition to SB1697 as currently written. I want to be clear that I am open to supporting this bill only if it is amended to include a basic sanitation-focused certification for braiders to protect the health and safety of the people of Hawai'i. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the proposal to exempt hair braiders from licensing requirements in the State of Hawai'i.

I want to begin by acknowledging that braiding is a culturally significant art form practiced for generations across many communities. It is a valued service, and many talented braiders contribute meaningfully to Hawai'i's beauty industry. My intention is not to diminish the cultural importance of braiding, but to ensure that public-health and consumer-safety standards remain protected.

As professionals who work directly with the public, we understand that any service involving direct contact with the scalp, hair, or skin carries sanitation responsibilities. While braiding does not involve chemicals or cutting, it still presents potential risks when proper sanitation practices are not followed.

Public-health data and national research support this concern. Even non-chemical services like braiding can transmit lice, ringworm, bacterial infections, and scalp irritation when conditions are not recognized and when tools are not properly sanitized. National studies have also found that many hair extensions and synthetic braiding products contain harmful chemicals—including carcinogens, pesticides, and heavy metals—which come into direct contact with the scalp. While these contaminants are not the braider's fault, the handling of these products and the sanitation of tools used with them directly affect consumer safety.

**LATE**

Public-health agencies consistently emphasize that infection control is essential for any hands-on service. Braiding involves close, prolonged contact with the scalp, repeated use of combs and clips, and potential exposure to open sores or fungal infections. Without basic sanitation training, braiders may unintentionally contribute to preventable public-health issues.

To be clear: I am not advocating for a full cosmetology or barber license for braiders. That would be unnecessarily burdensome and unrelated to the scope of their work. Instead, I respectfully recommend a limited, sanitation-focused certification that includes:

- Basic infection control
- Proper tool sanitation
- Scalp and skin disorder recognition
- When to refuse service
- Client safety and hygiene

This approach honors the cultural and artistic nature of braiding while ensuring that every person providing hands-on services to the public meets minimum health and safety standards.

Removing all forms of certification would eliminate the state's ability to monitor public protection. With no requirements in place, businesses could operate in residential areas with zero oversight or regulatory safeguards.

To provide context, here is a brief comparison of how other states regulate braiding:

State	License Required?	Sanitation / Training Requirement
Texas	No	Mandatory sanitation course
Florida	No	16-hour sanitation & HIV/AIDS course
Georgia	No	Sanitation training required
Tennessee	No	16-hour health & sanitation course
Louisiana	Yes – 500-hour specialty license	Includes sanitation & scalp disorders
Mississippi	No	Self-certification on sanitation
South Carolina	No	6-hour sanitation course
Hawai'i (Proposed)	Exempt braiders	No sanitation requirement

As shown above, most states that exempt braiders from full licensure still require sanitation training. Hawai'i would be an outlier if it removed all requirements without replacing them with a basic health-and-safety standard.

A sanitation-only certification is a balanced, culturally respectful, and public-health-aligned solution. It protects consumers, supports professionals, and maintains the integrity of Hawai'i's beauty industry without placing unnecessary burdens on braiders.

**LATE**

For the health and safety of the public, I respectfully request that this committee amend SB1697 to better protect the people of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Leo Williams  
Licensed Barber and Cosmetologist  
Hawaii Institute of Hair Design  
Mobile: (808) 781-2621

Zairrah Geyrozaga  
1128 Nuuanu Ave., Suite 102  
Honolulu, HI 96817  
(808) 725-8661  
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February 23, 2026

To: Chair Jarett Keohokalole, Vice Chair Carol Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee

RE: Opposition to HB1697 Unless Amended – Natural Hair Braiding

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

My name is Zairrah Geyrozaga, and I am a licensed esthetician and community member in Honolulu. I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB1697 as currently written, but I would be supportive of the bill if it included a basic sanitation requirement for individuals who provide braiding services.

As someone who works hands-on with clients every day, I understand how important cultural beauty practices are, including natural hair braiding. I fully respect and support the intention to protect and uplift these traditions. At the same time, any service involving direct contact with the scalp or skin requires a minimum level of health awareness to prevent the spread of infections. Even without chemicals or cutting, braiding can expose both the client and the practitioner to lice, fungal infections, and bacterial issues if tools are not properly cleaned or if scalp conditions go unrecognized. Many synthetic hair products used in braiding also contain chemicals that sit directly on the skin for long periods of time, which makes sanitation and product handling even more important.

Across the country, most states that exempt braiders from full cosmetology licensing still require some form of sanitation or health-safety training. Hawai'i would be one of the few states with no requirement at all if HB1697 passes unchanged.

A simple, low-cost sanitation course—focused on tool cleaning, infection control, and identifying when a client should not be serviced—would protect consumers while still honoring the cultural and artistic nature of braiding.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the committee to amend HB1697 to include a basic sanitation-focused certification. With that addition, I would support the bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Zairrah Geyrozaga  
Licensed Esthetician  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

**LATE**

**HB-1697**

Submitted on: 2/24/2026 12:02:13 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/24/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaiulani Flores	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kaiulani Flores, and I am a natural hair braider from Maui. I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 1620, which will finally remove unnecessary licensing barriers that prevent individuals like me from earning an honest living doing what we love.

From a young age, I have been passionate about braiding. Like many other artists, I dedicated countless hours to mastering my craft. However, despite my skill and years of experience, Hawaii prohibits me from braiding for pay unless I complete a burdensome and irrelevant licensing process that requires 1,250 hours of instruction in services I do not provide—such as cutting, coloring, and chemical treatments. The only cosmetology school in Maui that offers this training costs nearly \$17,000, an expense that is both unreasonable and unnecessary for braiders like me.

This restrictive requirement does not serve the public interest. Braiding is a natural skill that does not involve chemicals, cutting, or tools that pose health or safety risks. In fact, over 30 states—including California, Florida, and Texas—have already exempted braiders from licensure without any reported issues. Hawaii should follow their lead and allow hair braiders to work legally and openly without fear of fines or imprisonment.

Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, and independent workers like me deserve the opportunity to contribute without unnecessary barriers. Removing these restrictions

**LATE**

would not only support aspiring entrepreneurs but also increase access to culturally significant hair services for Hawaii's diverse communities.

Five times since 1980, Hawaii's Office of the Auditor has studied whether the beauty industry needs licensing at all, and each time, the answer has been no. Yet lawmakers have failed to act. By passing SB 1620, you can change this and take an important step toward fairness and economic opportunity for local braiders and small-business owners across our state.

I ask for your support in voting YES on SB 1620. Please stand with us in recognizing hair braiding as a legitimate profession that should not be burdened with excessive and unnecessary regulation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Kaiulani Flores